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ABSTRACT

In testimony presented at hearings on New York City's public school budget, the Educational Priorities Panel (EPP), which represents 25 special interest groups, commented on the budget proposal, shared lessons EPP has learned that bear on the budget process, and identified the priorities resulting from EPP's research and consensus activities. EPP expressed concern about student promotion policy, vocational education programs, and special education funding. They also urged that funds be concentrated on basic instruction. (Author/WD)

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EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES PANEL

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED AT THE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET REQUEST THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 1981

GOOD MORNING, I AM HELEN C. HELLER, COORDINATOR OF THE EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES PANEL. THE EPP IS BEGINNING ITS SIXTH YEAR, AND THIS IS THE FIFTH TIME THAT WE HAVE COME AS A CITYWIDE COALITION TO TESTIFY AT THE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET REQUEST. THESE HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT YEARS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, BUT I THINK THAT THE ENTIRE EDUCATION COMMUNITY HAS GAINED VALUABLE EXPERIENCES IN MORE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF SCARCE RESOURCES. SCARCITY IS STILL WITH US, BUT THIS YEAR'S CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET AND THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET RELEASED BY THE MAYOR ON FRIDAY REFLECT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS. I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON BOTH OF THESE DOCUMENTS WHICH WILL SHAPE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S BUDGET FOR NEXT YEAR. THE FINAL RECONCILIATION WILL DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE IMPORTANT LESSONS THAT THE EPP HAS LEARNED AND HOPES TO BRING TO BEAR ON THIS YEAR'S BUDGET PROCESS. AND FINALLY, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, I WOULD LIKE TO STATE THE PRIORITIES THAT 25 GROUPS WHICH COMPRISE THE EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES PANEL HAVE IDENTIFIED AS A RESULT OF OUR RESEARCH AND CONSENSUS PROCESS. THESE ARE THE AREAS IN WHICH INCREASED SPENDING IS MOST URGENTLY NEEDED AND WILL, WE FEEL, YIELD THE MOST BENEFIT FOR STUDENTS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

MEMBERSHIP: Advocates for Children • Alliance for Children • The American Jewish Committee • ASPIRA of New York • Association for the Help of Retarded Children • Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Inc • The City Club of New York • City-Wide Confederation of High School Parents Associations • Coalition of 100 Black Women • Community Council of Greater New York • Community Service Society • Junior League of Brooklyn • Junior League of New York City, Inc • League of Women Voters • NAACP • New York Urban Coalition • New York Urban League • Parents Action Committee for Children • Presbytery of New York City • Public Education Association • Queensboro Federation of Parents Clubs • Rheedlen Foundation • United Neighborhood Houses • United Parents Associations • Women's City Club of New York

THE CHANCELLOR HAS REQUESTED TAX LEVY INCREASES TOTALING $392 MILLION. OF THIS AMOUNT, $113.6 MILLION IS TARGETED TO SPECIFIC "PROGRAMMATIC ENHANCEMENTS."

SUCH GOOD NEWS, HOWEVER, WILL NOT BECOME A REALITY WITHOUT BETTER DOCUMENTATION OF NEED AND SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION PLANS. THESE WILL INSURE A FAVORABLE RECEPTION BY PARENTS, TAXPAYERS, AND CITY OFFICIALS.

WE HAVE SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS ABOUT THREE OF THE CHANCELLOR'S PROPOSALS: PROMOTION POLICY, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PER CAPITA.

FIRST, PROMOTION POLICY. THERE IS CERTAINLY ADEQUATE EVIDENCE THAT THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE FAILING MANY OF OUR YOUNGSTERS AND THAT REMEDIATION SERVICES ARE SORELY NEEDED. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SEVERAL QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE ANSWERED IF THE BOARD IS GOING TO RECEIVE BOTH POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROMOTION POLICY.

- WHAT ACTIVITIES COMPRISE THE PROGRAM? WILL THERE BE PROGRAMMATIC OPTIONS? ARE THERE MINIMUM STANDARDS? WILL THERE BE TEACHER TRAINING, NEW MATERIALS, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM CENTRAL?
- HOW WILL THE PROGRAM BE ADMINISTERED? HOW MANY STAFF WITH WHAT DUTIES? WHAT WILL BE THE REPORTING AND MONITORING REQUIREMENTS?
- WE UNDERSTAND THERE IS AS YET NO ASSURANCE THAT ANY OF THE $29 MILLION IN REIMBURSABLE FUNDS CAN BE USED FOR THIS PROGRAM. ARE THERE

CONTINGENCY PLANS? WHAT WILL FILL THE VACUUM ONCE FUNDING IS TRANSFERRED FROM THOSE SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAMS WHICH ARE WORKING EFFECTIVELY.

- FINALLY, WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IF THE PROMOTION POLICY IS FUNDED WITH ONLY $5, $10, $20, OR $30 MILLION IN TAX LEVY DOLLARS, INSTEAD OF THE $34 MILLION REQUESTED?

THE SECOND AREA THAT IS INADEQUATELY DOCUMENTED IS THE UPGRADING OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. AS YOU KNOW, THIS IS A PRIORITY AREA FOR THE EPP. IN OUR STUDY RELEASED IN JULY, HELP WANTED, WE UNDERSCORED THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE PROGRAMS. WE ALSO MADE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE OCCUPATIONAL AND CAREER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WE ARE ALSO EAGER TO SEE A STREAMLINED, MORE EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION OF THESE SERVICES. IN TERMS TERMS OF DOCUMENTING NEED, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE DIVISION OF HIGH SCHOOLS DETERMINE THE SUCCESS OF EXISTING PROGRAMS, IN TERMS OF STUDENT INTEREST OR APPLICATION RATES AND ALSO IN TERMS OF STUDENT PLACEMENT IN JOBS OR ADVANCED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. COMBINED WITH ACCURATE DATA ON JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LABOR MARKET, THIS INFORMATION SHOULD DETERMINE WHICH PROGRAMS WILL BE TERMINATED AND WHICH SHOULD BE CONTINUED, EXPANDED, OR REPLICATED. IN ADDITION, WE URGE YOU TO DESIGN A MECHANISM FOR EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR BEFORE FINALIZING CURRICULA OR PURCHASING EQUIPMENT. MONIES ARE NOT WELL-SPENT ON UPDATED EQUIPMENT IF

STUDENTS COULD BE GIVEN ON-SITE TRAINING OR IF SKILLS LEARNED ON OLDER EQUIPMENT CONTINUE TO BE APPLICABLE. AND IT IS CERTAINLY A WASTE TO PURCHASE MACHINERY THAT GOES UNUSED BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE INSTALLED, MAINTAINED OR REPAIRED. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO REPEAT THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST. FINALLY, A WELL DOCUMENTED PLAN FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SHOULD INCLUDE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES WHICH CAN BE MONITORED.

THE THIRD AREA OF CONCERN IS THE REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL EDUCATION PER CAPITA FOR HIGH SCHOOLS. THE EPP HAS SUPPORTED THIS FUNDING FOR THE DISTRICT ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS TO COVER THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS OF SCHOOLS WHICH WELCOME SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS. A SIMILAR PROBLEM RESULTS IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS. AGAIN, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO DOCUMENT SPECIFIC EXCESS COSTS IN THE SCHOOLS. ALSO, THE EPP RECOMMENDS THAT THESE FUNDS BE ALLOCATED TO THE BUDGET OF THE DIVISION OF HIGH SCHOOLS, NOT THE DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GIVE TO THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL THE DISCRETION TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE PROBLEM.

THE EPP MEMBERS WERE PLEASED TO SEE MANY OF OUR PRIORITIES INCLUDED IN THE CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET REQUEST AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE EARLIER RECOMMENDATIONS. FIRST AND FOREMOST IS OUR DEDICATION TO BASIC INSTRUCTION. WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE MID-YEAR ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR ADDITIONAL TEACHERS IN THE DISTRICTS AND HIGH SCHOOLS. FUNDING FOR THE DISTRICTS SHOULD BE USED TO AUGMENT THE INSTRUCTIONAL MODULE SO IT CAN BE SPENT ACCORDING TO DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES. IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS, IMPORTANT STEPS HAVE BEEN

TAKEN TOWARDS INCREASING THE EQUITY OF THE ALLOCATION FORMULA AND RAISING THE CURRICULUM INDEX. WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE DIVISION OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE COOPERATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE DEVELOPED. IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THE DIVISION OF HIGH SCHOOLS RECEIVE THE NECESSARY FUNDING TO PROVIDE A FULL-SCHOOL DAY OR ITS EQUIVALENT TO EVERY STUDENT, REQUIRING AN ADDITIONAL $7 MILLION.

IN ADDITION, THE EPP HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN AND THE EXISTING SPECIAL EDUCATION PER CAPITA. WE HOPE THAT FUNDS CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THESE PURPOSES, THE $6 MILLION REQUESTED TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN CLASSES AND $5.6 MILLION FOR THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PER CAPITA FOR DISTRICTS AND HIGH SCHOOLS.

FINALLY, THE EPP IS HAPPY TO SEE THE CHANCELLOR'S REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR MAINTENANCE. WE HAVE COMMENTED IN THE PAST ON THE BOARD'S MANAGEMENT OF THE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM, BUT NEVER DENIED THE NECESSITY OF ATTENDING TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM'S PHYSICAL PLANT. IN THIS AREA, WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE AN ADDITIONAL SUGGESTION. THERE IS LITTLE INCENTIVE TO MAKE SAVINGS IF THE DOLLARS GO TO SOMECNE ELSE'S BENEFIT. JUST AS IT IS MORE REWARDING FOR THE CENTRAL BOARD TO MAKE ADMINISTRATIVE SAVINGS WHEN THESE ARE REALLOCATED TO SERVICES RATHER THAN RETURNED FOR THE CITY'S BUDGET GAP, DISTRICTS WILL BE MORE RESPONSIVE AND CREATIVE IF THEY WILL SEE THE BENEFITS OF THEIR ACTIONS. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE DIVISION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS CONSIDER INCENTIVES FOR THE DISTRICTS BY SHARING ANY SAVINGS WHICH ARE

MADE AND BY INCREASING THE DISTRICT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SETTING MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES.

ALL OF THESE PRIORITIES AND REQUESTS MUST BE VIEWED IN TERMS OF A REASONABLE EXPECTATION OF FUNDING. WE HAVE LEARNED THROUGH THE YEARS THAT ESTIMATES OF CITY REVENUES RISE DURING THE BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, AND WE EXPECT AS WE HAVE DURING THE LAST THREE BUDGET CYCLES, TO IMPROVE SIGNIFICANTLY THE LEVEL OF FUNDING FOR EDUCATION BY THE TIME THE BUDGET IS APPROVED IN JUNE.

THE FINANCIAL PLAN, OR PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1982 FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATINO INCLUDES A $45.1 MILLION IN ADMINISTRATIVE REDUCTIONS OF THE BASE AND REALLOCATION OF $34.3 MILLION INTO NEW EXPENDITURES, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH ARE SERVICE INCREASES. THE MAYOR'S BUDGET FOR EDUCATION DOES NOT REFLECT ALL OF THE NEEDS WHICH THE SCHOOLS MUST ADDRESS IN THE COMING YEAR. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE SIGNS. FIRST, THE SUGGESTED CUT IS LESS THAN HALF OF THE PEG CUTS PROPOSED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. SECOND, THIS IS THE FIRST YEAR THAT A PRELIMINARY BUDGET PROVIDES FOR ANY REALLOCATIONS INTO SERVICES AND THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1978 THAT FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN ADDED FUNDS USED MERELY TO FEND OFF CUTBACKS. FINALLY, THE MAYOR'S PRELIMINARY BUDGET APPEARS TO PROVIDE AND ADEQUATE BASE BUDGET, COVERING MANDATED AND FIXED COST INCREASES. WE APPLAUD THE MAYOR AND HIS OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THE CHANCELLOR, AND HIS STAFF FOR RESOLVING THE TECHNICAL DISCREPANCIES WHICH HAVE HAD SUCH DIRE

CONSEQUENCES IN THE PAST. WE ARE ALSO GLAD THAT THE CITY HAS PROPERLY ALLOCATED $24.2 MILLION IN EXPECTED STATE AID TO THE BOARD WHICH CAN PROVIDE THE BEGINNING OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS. WE HAVE BEEN GLAD TO LEND THE BOARD OUR SUPPORT IN ELEVATING PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE MYSTERIES OF BASE BUDGETS AND CLAIMS REIMBURSEMENT IN ORDER TO BRING THEM TO THE CITY'S ATTENTION.

WE ARE NOT SAYING THAT WE ARE SATISFIED WITH THE MAYOR'S PROPOSALS. BUT WE DO KNOW THAT THIS IS MERELY THE BEGINNING OF FOUR AND A HALF MONTHS OF NEGOTIATIONS AND WE DO SEEM TO BE IN AN EXCELLENT BARGAINING POSITION. BUT, IF WE ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH SOLID BASIC EDUCATION, THE BOARD OF EDUCATION IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE WELL PREPARED TO GO TO THE BARGAINING TABLE. THIS IS WHERE THE INFORMATION THAT WE HAVE REQUESTED BECOMES PARAMOUNT.

WE IN THE EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES PANEL HAVE FOUND THAT THERE ARE THREE WEAPONS OR TOOLS THAT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS: AN ON-GOING COMMITMENT TO AN EFFICIENT, STREAMLINED ADMINISTRATION, A COMPLETE DOCUMENTATION OF THE NEED FOR NEW SERVICES, AND THE PRESENTATION OF AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN THAT INCLUDES SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR MONITORING.

WE HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED THE NEED, AS WE SEE IT, FOR MORE DETAILED DOCUMENTATION AND PLANS. IF WE, THE MOST ARDENT SUPPORTERS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, SEE THIS GAP IN THE CHANCELLOR'S REQUEST, CERTAINLY THE CITY WILL LEAP UPON IT AS A WEAKNESS.

LET ME NOW SPEAK OF THE COMMITMENT TO A LEAN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE. THE CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET REQUEST DOES NOT

PROJECT ANY ADMINISTRATIVE SAVINGS. HOWEVER, DURING OUR MEETING WITH THE CHANCELLOR AND HIS STAFF, HE INDICATED THAT THE BOARD WOULD CONTINUE TO EXACT SAVINGS IN THE AREAS OF LEASE TERMINATIONS, SCHOOL CLOSINGS, BUS UTILIZATION, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION. FORTHCOMING EPP REPORTS WILL RECOMMEND ADDITIONAL AREAS. IN ADDITION, WE WILL LOOK AT SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDITURES IN PARTICULAR. FINALLY, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LEDGER, WE WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING AND THE CITY'S REVENUE ESTIMATES. THE ADMINISTRATIVE CUTS MADE OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE BOARD CAN INCREASE ITS EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS AND CAN MANAGE WITH LESS ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDS. THE BOARD'S CREDIBILITY IS TIED TO MAINTAINING THE IMPORTANT GAINS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE. YOU MUST CONTINUE TO COMMIT ALL NEW DOLLARS TO FUNDING INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES AND IMPLEMENT ALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT REFORMS IN ORDER TO FREE MONEY FOR REALLOCATIONS.

THE EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES PANEL IS EAGER TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE CHANCELLOR'S REQUEST. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE NEED IS URGENT. THAT IS WHY WE WANT YOUR PLANS TO BE AS CREDIBLE AND CONVINCING AS POSSIBLE. WE LOOK FORWARD TO BEING ABLE TO STAND BEHIND YOU AND SAYING, WITH UTMOST CONVICTION: "HERE IS AN AGENCY THAT HAS TAKEN ITS SHARE OF CUTBACKS IN THE WORST OF TIMES AND HAS RESPONDED WITH GREATER AND GREATER EFFICIENCY. NOW IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO THE CHILDREN THE FRUITS OF OUR FRUGALITY AND BUILD BACK TO A PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM NEW YORKERS WILL BE PROUD TO CALL THEIR OWN."

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RE: School Budget Hearings
January 22, 1981
110 Livingston Street

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

Hailing better times ahead for the city's public schools, a coalition of 25 citywide civic and parent organizations today called for a leaner Board of Education bureaucracy so that all new school funding can be devoted to instructional services next year.

Speaking at public hearings on the proposed school budget at 110 Livingston Street, Helen C. Heller, Coordinator of the Educational Priorities Panel, looking forward to the end of "the worst of times" declared, "now it is time to return to the children the fruits of our frugality and build back to a public school system New Yorkers will be proud to call their own."

Last month, Frank Macchiarola, Chancellor of Schools, submitted a budget request to the Board of Education totalling $3.1 billion, an increase of almost 400 million dollars over last year. However, of this amount more than half is for mandated and inflationary increases and only $113 million is for "programmatic enhancements," including an extensive building repair and maintenance program, improved

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vocational education courses and implementation of the new promotion policy.

Ms. Heller applauded these plans but called for more documentation of exactly how the money would be used. "We want your plans to be as credible and convincing as possible," she said to the members of the Board of Education, "so you can be well prepared to go to the bargaining table [with the city]."

Last week, Mayor Koch proposed $45 million in administrative reductions at the Board and reallocation of $34 million into new expenditures and service increases.

Specifically, the Panel questioned what remediation services will be offered to support the new promotion policy. Ms. Heller also warned against expanding career training in areas where there are no jobs, she urged the allowance of extra funds to high schools for special education students. (See attached testimony.)

The EPP will make recommendations for additional administrative savings that can be effected in the school budget and for sources of increased revenues before a final budget is adopted.